

St Thomas' and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Maundy Thursday
April 17, 2025
rmcneely+

Do this in remembrance of me

The Church has given us this service on this night to point us toward the Last Supper.

Toward the institution of the Holy Communion.

We have lots of words for it:

We call it Communion—that close union with God
Eucharist—a Greek word for thanksgiving
Mass—from the Latin word for dismissal,
the very end of the service

But, by any name

What is it that we do?

What happens?

Why do we do it?

Night is falling on Jerusalem

2000 years ago,

it is the night before the Passover.

Jesus and the 12 Apostles are holed up in an upper room.

Jesus knows this is the night of his arrest.

He will be found guilty in a series of trials.

By tomorrow afternoon,

He will be dead and buried.

Jesus knows this is the last night he will spend with the 12 before it all begins.

A lot happens in a short time span.

He gives them His last discourse;
 The last words.
 Last bits of advice-His Commandment
 —Love one another as I have loved you.
 He tells Peter that he will denounce Him 3 times before the dawn.

He washes their feet
 A physical lesson of humility,
 Shows them that to lead is to serve.
 He is betrayed
 And identifies his betrayer.

However, the most enduring thing He did that night
 is what brings us here tonight.
 Despite the fact that He will be killed, resurrected and later
 Ascended onto Heaven;
 He instructs them in a liturgy
 That will let them
 Be with Him;
 He gives them:
 Holy Communion.

He sat them down and He worked them through it
 Without fan fare or elaborate explanation.

He took bread and when He had given thanks,
 He break it
 And gave it to them saying;
 This is my body which is given for you.

He took the cup and when He had given thanks
 He gave it to them saying
 Drink ye all of this
 For this is my blood
 Which is shed for you.

He showed them and simply, told them;
 “Do this”.

Little of it makes sense to the baffled Apostles.
 How could it?
 It is all too much
 Too awful
 And yet, too wonderful.

Like us, they will need time
 Time to remember their days with Him.
 Time to consider what He told them.
 Time to come to terms with what happened.

After a time, the Apostles remembered::
 ‘What was that He said again?’:
 “Do this in remembrance of Me.”
 That’s right, that’s what He said
 We must do what He said
 “Do this” and in Latin it was Mandatum
 From which we get words like: mandate, mandatory.
 We must do what He commanded us to do.

It was likely some time later that they remembered the feeding miracles
 The 5000
 The 4000
 When He took bread
 He gave thanks
 He brake it
 And He gave it to the Apostles to distribute to the multitude.
 Did they connect the bread of the feeding miracles with
 What He had told them that night:
 He held the bread and said:
 “‘This is my body which is given for you”.

Were the feeding miracles a prophecy of what He told them that night?

Did St John remind them what Jesus had told them as John tells us in his Gospel: Jesus said:

“I am the living bread which came down from Heaven,
if any man eat of this bread
he shall live forever:
and the bread that I will give is my flesh
which I will give for the life of the world.”

Was it all coming together?

Did His words now have meaning?

Apart from what they themselves had witnessed

Did they recall the time in the Old Testament
when the Hebrews were wondering in the desert
and God provided the manna, the bread of heaven?

Was that a prophecy too?

Was the Old Testament a prophecy that was fulfilled by the
New?

Did they recall the ancient story of the time from Genesis that
Abraham returned from a victorious battle?

And encountered the mystical figure: Melchizedek?

Clouded by the mists of time,

When the priest Melchizedek went to the altar and blessed

And offered bread and wine.

Was this mysterious character, the King of Salem (peace)

Laying the ground work for the Holy Communion

that was to come?

It was all coming together for them.

And so the liturgy of the Holy Communion evolved.

And it all revolves around that last night in the upper room.

But it reaches back to the ancient times of the Old Testament

The bread, the body
The wine, the blood

The Hebrew substitutionary sacrifices demanded by the oldest books,

The body and blood of the animals sacrificed in the temple.
The manna that God provided in the 40 years in the desert.

And it all came together in the liturgy.

In His mandate.

In the Communion.

That night;

That last night;

That night He would be the last sacrifice.

“Do This”

It had to be that last night.

He gave them the bread saying:

“Take, eat. This is my body, which is given for you”.

Then he took the cup of wine

He gave thanks

He gave it to them saying

“Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood”.

“Do this”.

So what is it that the priest places in your hand or in your mouth?

What is in the chalice?

Is that the Body of Christ in your hand?

Is that the Blood of Christ in the Chalice?

Is Jesus actually present during the Mass?

On that one I have to tell you

That there have been too many times in my life
when He was there

For me to tell you that since human science cannot prove it
It didn't happen.

Jesus told us.

You can read about in John 6 beginning at verse 48:

Now this is hard hitting so take a breath:

“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink
his blood ye have no life in you
Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life and
I will raise him up at the last day.
He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and
I in him.”

Are we to re-interpret or somehow explain away those words?

Did the bread and the wine become the body and blood?

Is it important that we know how it happens?

I am privileged to be inches away when it takes place.

I cannot tell you how it happens or even precisely when in the
consecration prayers it happens

But by faith I know it happens.

Will God refuse me entrance into everlasting life if I do not
believe?

Will I be denied heaven if I do not believe?

Jesus gave us two sacraments

Holy baptism

Holy communion

These He told us were necessary for our salvation.

Now ask yourself

What is in your hand?

What is in the chalice?